

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP SERIES

# Before You Ask

## *A Guide for Church Leadership on Selecting and Placing Volunteers*

*Most volunteer attrition is not a failure of willingness. It is a failure of clarity and alignment. Before you ask someone to serve; in any capacity from ministry volunteer to deacon, elder, or trustee, ensure you are ready to lead them well.*

### What You Owe Every Candidate

<p><b>Define Before You Recruit</b></p> <p>If you cannot describe the role clearly in writing; time, responsibility, term, and authority, you are not ready to ask. Ambiguity transferred to a volunteer becomes their burden to carry.</p>	<p><b>Disclose Fully and Honestly</b></p> <p>Share relevant organizational context before commitment, not after. Active conflicts, financial pressures, or governance tensions are things a candidate deserves to know. Withholding them is not protection, it is a breach of trust.</p>
<p><b>Give Them Room to Say No</b></p> <p>A yes given under social or relational pressure is a resignation waiting to happen. Invite them to pray, consult their household, and ask questions. A candidate who needs time is exercising wisdom, not showing hesitation.</p>	<p><b>Honor What You Asked For</b></p> <p>Once someone commits, support the role you described. Provide orientation, governing document access, and a named point of contact. Do not let the role expand beyond what was agreed without renegotiation.</p>

### Questions to Ask Yourselfes

<p><b>Before the Conversation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the role defined in writing?</li> <li>• Is the time commitment documented?</li> </ul>	<p><b>During the Conversation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are we giving them time to decide?</li> <li>• Have we disclosed conflicts or tensions?</li> <li>• Did we name who they report to?</li> </ul>	<p><b>After They Say Yes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is an orientation scheduled?</li> <li>• Do they have governing documents?</li> <li>• Is there a named contact for questions?</li> <li>• Are meetings scheduled consistently?</li> </ul>
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## Reading the Candidate

You Have the Right Person When...	Reconsider the Timing When...
They ask clarifying questions about the role	They say yes immediately without any questions
They ask to consult their spouse or household	They seem eager to please rather than to serve
They express a genuine connection to the mission	The role is being filled out of availability, not fit
They can describe what they bring to the role	You are asking because no one else said yes

### A Note on Roles That Never Reset

Youth, children's, and other relational ministries do not follow a standard term cycle. Each year brings a new group of students who need consistent adult presence. If you are considering one of these roles, understand that the off-ramp looks different. Transitions require advance planning, overlap, and a successor ready before you step back. Your presence *is* the ministry. See the companion guide: **When the Role Never Really Ends.**

A volunteer who burns out or feels misled does not just leave the role, **they often leave the church.**